

2139 Silas Deane Highway
Suite 205
Rocky Hill, CT 06067
(860) 257-8066

Raymie H. Wayne, Ph.D., JD, MSW, President
Stephen A Karp, MSW, Executive Director
naswct@naswct.net

**Testimony on SB 124: AAC Licensure Requirements for Master Social Workers
Public Health Committee
February 28, 2014**

Submitted By: Stephen Karp, MSW

The National Association of Social Workers, Connecticut chapter supports SB 124. This bill adds schools that are in candidacy with the Council on Social Work Education to the educational institutions statutorily recognized for applicants applying for social work licensure as a Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW). The current statute only mentions CSWE accredited programs thus disallowing graduates of a school in CSWE candidacy from license eligibility until their school attains full CSWE accreditation.

When NASW/CT drafted the LMSW statute back in 2008 there were no schools seeking to start MSW programs. Thus the need for allowing schools in candidacy to qualify was not an issue so we did not think of including language allowing for such circumstances. There are now two schools with new MSW programs, one in formal candidacy and one moving toward formal candidacy, plus there is potential for a third new MSW program in our state. This necessitates that the LMSW statute be revised to recognize these new MSW programs.

Every school that has attained candidacy with CSWE reaches full accreditation. However CSWE's process requires that at least one class be graduated prior to full accreditation, with the accreditation being retroactive to the first graduating class. Revising the LMSW statute avoids disadvantaging the graduates of a school in candidacy, and allows for the graduate to begin their chosen career path.

We have identified nine states that will license MSW graduates from a school in candidacy (there are likely other states that we have not identified), including neighboring Massachusetts. We already experience new graduates taking jobs in neighboring states because of the lack of the LMSW in CT. Now that we are close to starting the LMSW we do not want to continue to encourage our graduates to seek employment across the border. It is important to note here that not all states include CSWE in their licensure requirements thus having identified nine states is significant.

Because the LMSW will be required for new MSW graduates entering clinical social work it is imperative that graduates from a school in CSWE candidacy be able to sit for the LMSW exam and once they pass be licensed. It is important here to note that these new graduates will need to pass the master level licensure exam in order to attain the LMSW. To not pass SB 124 means that the initial graduates from a school in candidacy will not be able to accept a clinical social work position until their school is fully accredited, most likely at least one year after they graduate. This means they will have to put their career on hold or relocate to another state where they can become licensed. Either way the state loses qualified social work professionals who are prepared to enter our workforce.

According to the CSWE no school that has been granted candidacy has failed to be fully accredited. The process of being approved for candidacy is rigorous so that students from a program in candidacy are receiving the same quality education as a student from an accredited program. This should be reassuring to the Legislature and DPH in that we will not be faced with having to rescind a license due to a school's failure to achieve full accreditation. Thus there is no cause for concern in terms of licensing a new graduate from a school in candidacy and we see no reason not to amend the LMSW statute as presented today in bill SB 124.

One key role NASW undertakes is upholding the highest standards of social work practice. We put much work and resources into passage of the LMSW. Our association would not support a change to our licensure statute if we thought it would weaken professional social work practice standards in Connecticut. Our support for this bill speaks to our belief that this is a necessary and positive revision of our licensure law.

NASW has student members and the requirement is to be a matriculating student in a social work program accredited by or **in candidacy** with CSWE. NASW recognizes students from schools in candidacy and urge you to follow suit in regards to the LMSW by passage of SB 124.

Finally, let me say that the LMSW was funded in the FY 2013/14 state budget. It is our hope that DPH will finally initiate the LMSW without further delay so that our MSW graduates can become licensed in the same way that at least 44 other states currently allow. The LMSW will add public accountability, greatly assist new graduates in finding employment in Connecticut and will bring in new revenues above the cost of operating the license.